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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: BULGARIA: HAJIEV'S EXTRADITION BACK IN THE COURTS

REF: A. 2006 SOFIA 1392

[1](#)B. 2006 STATE 179819

[1](#)C. 2006 ASHGABAT 1135

[1](#)D. 2006 ASHGABAT 1293

Classified By: DCM Alex Karagiannis, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. Summary: Annadurdy Hajiev, an accused embezzler and critic of Turkmenistan's human rights record, was re-arrested on February 20 on what seems to be an old Turkmenistan INTERPOL notice. A Bulgarian court denied the same request for extradition in 2003 because it judged the charge to be politically motivated. Human rights groups are paying close attention to the case and stress that Hajiev has a well-founded fear of persecution if he is returned to Turkmenistan. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Annadurdy Hajiev will remain in custody until April 3, during which time Turkmenistan is supposed to present a formal request for extradition. Hajiev, the former deputy chairman of Central Bank of Turkmenistan, stands accused of embezzling \$40 million from the bank in 2001. He and his wife Tajigul Begmedova, who are outspoken -- if sensationalist -- critics of Turkmenistan's human rights record, claim the charges are politically motivated.

[1](#)3. (C) This is the second time Hajiev has been arrested in Bulgaria for the same charges. In 2003, the Bulgarian court refused to extradite him because it judged Turkmenistan's request to be politically motivated and insufficiently supported by evidence. The 'new' extradition request is based on the same 2002 charge, and may be the result of Turkmenistan's recent membership in INTERPOL.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Human Rights Watch (HRW) in New York sent a letter to the courts and the General Prosecutor arguing against extradition because Hajiev "would face an almost certain risk of torture." Begmedova told us previously that she and Hajiev have a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to Turkmenistan (ref. A). She cites as proof the suspicious October 2006 death of Hajiev's sister Ogulsapar Muradova, a journalist and outspoken critic of the government who died while in police custody, as well as the arrest of other family members. Embassy Ashgabat's reporting (ref. C) and the Department's Human Rights Report cover these cases.

[1](#)5. (C) COMMENT: We are in no position to determine the merits of the embezzlement case, but it strikes us that whatever his guilt or innocence, the real question is whether he would be treated humanely and accorded a fair trial in Turkmenistan. While the extradition case is before the courts, the USG has no formal remit. In case the courts rule to extradite, the Department may have to consider whether to weigh in, and weigh in quickly. The human rights community would certainly look to us. In the meantime, by continuing

to monitor the case, we informally convey our interest to the
Bulgarian authorities.
BEYRLE